

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

NUMBER: CO-200-2003-0051 EA

PROJECT NAME: Vegetation and Recreation – Box Creek Vegetation and Travel Management

PLANNING UNIT: Arkansas River, # 1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.10S., R.80W., Sections 17, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34
T.11S., R.80W., Sections 2, 3, 10, 11

APPLICANT: BLM and USFS

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES: See USFS EA for details, page 14.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: See USFS EA for details, page 1.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 1-50, 1-68, 1-70, 1-76

The Proposed Action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

Standards for Public Land Health: The Standards are addressed in the appropriate Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences sections. The following table is a summary of those two sections. Project areas have been assessed for all Standards, however, not all Standards necessarily apply to all acres in the project area. "NA" denotes where a Standard does not apply and does not influence overall land health. Depending on the action analyzed, completion of this chart may be required, optional, or not required. Also, in completing this chart, either acres or checkmarks are acceptable in the appropriate row-column depending on the action analyzed.

Standard	Current Situation			With Proposed Action	
	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving
1. Upland Soils		X	Roads & recreational use	X	
2. Riparian Systems		X	Roads & recreational use	X	
3. Plant / Animal		X	Roads, recreational use, lack	X	

Diversity			of fire		
4. T & E Species	NA			NA	
5. Water Quality		X	Roads & recreational use	X	
Total Acres					
Total number of acres in project area:					

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES: See USFS EA for details, page 29.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: See USFS EA for details

BLM STAFF INVOLVED:

Roy L. Masinton	Field Manager
Paul Trentzsch	Staff Leader – Renewable Resources
Erik Brekke	Wildlife Biologist
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist
Tom Grette	Rangeland Management Specialist
John Nahomenuk	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Dave Toelle	Fire Ecologist
Dave Walker	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Pete Zwaneveld	Planning & Environmental Coordinator
Mike Gaylord	Haz-Mat Coordinator
Ernie Gillingham	Surface Reclamation Specialist
Dan Grenard	Geologist
Dave Hallock	Realty Specialist
John Smeins	Hydrologist
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist
Bob Wiegand	Fuels Management
Ed Skerjanec	Fire Management Officer
Jack Hagan	Law Enforcement Specialist

**DECISION RECORD
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

CO-200-2003-0051 EA

**Box Creek Vegetation and Travel Management
BLM Travel Management Portion**

**USDI Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office**

Lake County, Colorado

SUMMARY: I have decided to implement the Proposed Action, with selected mitigation measures, for the BLM travel management portion of the Box Creek Vegetation and Travel Management Plan, as described below. This action serves as an amendment to the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan.

INTRODUCTION: The Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses and analyzes the proposed activities is available for review at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Royal Gorge Field Office, 3170 E. Main Street, Canon City, CO, phone (719) 269-8559 and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) Leadville Ranger District office, 2015 N. Poplar, Leadville, CO, phone (719) 486-0749. All documents and maps may also be viewed on-line at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/leadvile/>. (NOTE: *Leadville is misspelled in the web address*)

This document describes my decision and rationale for the BLM travel management portion of the Box Creek Vegetation and Travel Management Plan on public lands of the Royal Gorge Field Office. The EA also includes national forest lands managed by the Leadville Ranger District of the San Isabel National Forest. A separate joint USFS/BLM Decision Notice addresses vegetation management decisions on both agency's lands and travel management decisions on USFS lands.

Under the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, an EA was prepared to determine whether the proposed action may cause significant environmental impacts (40 CFR 1500). A determination showing this action does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is found in the Finding of No Significant Impact portion of this document.

The decision and finding is based on the environmental assessment of the proposed activities and alternatives for the Box Creek Vegetation and Travel Management Plan and the goals and objectives stated in the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan (RMP).

BACKGROUND: The 18,644 acre project area is located southwest of Leadville, Colorado. It includes 13% BLM Public Lands, 46% National Forest System Lands, 5% Colorado State Land Board, and 36% private lands. Of the private land acreage, BLM is in the process of acquiring 1,570 acres (160

acres of the Hallenbeck Ranch and 1,410 acres of the Hayden Ranch). Upon acquisition, this will increase BLM's holdings to about 21% of the project area. This Decision Record covers only the travel management decisions on the BLM administered public lands and the lands BLM is in the process of acquiring.

The proposed action is to designate a system of roads in the Box Creek area. The authorized roads will become part of BLM's official transportation system. This action designates the specific routes, imposes seasonal limitations on certain routes, and closes some unauthorized routes.

DECISION: It is my decision to implement the following travel management actions for the BLM administered public lands and the lands BLM is in the process of acquiring in the Box Creek planning area. This decision is related to but distinct from the joint Decision Notice for all of the vegetation management decisions on BLM and USFS lands and the travel management decisions on USFS lands.

I have chosen the Proposed Action (as stated in the EA, page 14), with selected route modifications as detailed below. The system will consist of about 3.8 miles of road open all year, about 2.7 miles that are seasonally closed, about 1.5 miles are closed, except for administrative use, and about 14.6 miles of roads will be closed and restored. (*See the joint USFS/BLM Decision Notice for the USFS portion of the travel management plan.*)

The map, entitled Box Creek Watershed Restoration Final Travel System, attached to this decision shows the new network of system roads. This map is included in my decision.

Based upon public input, I have decided to make the following changes to the travel system on BLM administered public lands from that identified in the Proposed Action of the EA:

1. A road in the eastern and southern portions of Section 17 (T.10S., R.80W.), located in the north-central portion of the Box Creek Watershed. This road is 1.2 miles in length. In the Proposed Action this road was to be closed. Based on further review of public comments, this road connecting the pipeline road through BLM lands and private property to a county road, will remain open year round (noted on the map legend as Open all year #).
2. A road in the southwest quarter of Section 21 (T.10S., R.80W.), located in the northeast portion of the Box Creek Watershed. This road is 0.5 miles in length. In the Proposed Action this road was to be closed. Based on further review of public comments, this road will be open seasonally from June 1 through December 1 (noted on the map legend as Open Summer/Fall (June 1-December 1)#).
3. A road running from the pipeline road in the northeast quarter of Section 32 (T.10S., R.80W.), through Section 33 and ending in the southeast quarter of Section 28, located in the eastern portion of the Box Creek Watershed. This road is 1.5 miles in length, of which 1.1 miles are on BLM, with the remainder on USFS land. In the Proposed Action this road was to be converted to a non-motorized trail. Based on further review of public comments and to provide additional recreational use, this road will be open seasonally from June 1 through December 1 (noted on the map legend as Open Summer/Fall (June 1 – December 1)#). (*NOTE: See the joint USFS/BLM Decision Notice for the USFS portion of this road segment*)

All of the "Actions Common to All Action Alternatives" that apply to BLM's travel management and that are listed on pages 17-20 in the EA are included in this decision.

The monitoring plan for this project is located in the project file.

RATIONALE: The selected mix of the Proposed Action and the above listed changes for travel management will best balance the resource needs and protection with recreational demands. I have determined this based on the findings and analysis in the EA, including supporting documentation and reports, and extensive public participation and involvement in this project.

This decision will meet or move towards meeting all RMP goals and objectives and the Standards for Public Land Health.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI): The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. These proposals do not involve significant environmental impacts in context and intensity. The proposal, with approved mitigation measures, results in a Finding Of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

PROTEST OPPORTUNITIES: Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the amendment of a resource management plan may protest such amendment. A protest may raise only those issues that were submitted for the record during the planning process. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage.

The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director, at the following address (for regular mail):

Director (210)
Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Brenda Williams, Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 66538
Washington, DC 20035

For overnight (Fedex) mailing, send protests to:

Director (210)
Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Brenda Williams, Protest Coordinator
1620 L Street, N.W., Suite 1075
Washington, DC 20036

For an amendment, the protest must be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date. The effective date is September 5, 2003.

The protest shall contain: 1) the name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest; 2) a statement of the issue or issues being protested; 3) a statement of the part or parts of the amendment being protested; 4) a copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and 5) a concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong. *This is a critical part of your protest.* Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents, environmental analysis documents, or available planning records (i.e., meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.). A

protest that merely expresses disagreement with the Colorado BLM State Director's proposed decision, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of your information or insight. In this case, the Director's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

The Director will promptly render a decision on the protest. The decision will be in writing and will set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision of the Director will be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

The project file is available for public review at the Leadville Ranger District Office, 2015 N. Poplar, Leadville, CO. Please direct questions about this Decision Record/FONSI to Pete Zwaneveld, Land Use Planner, Royal Gorge Field Office, (719) 269-8559.

SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL:

/s/ Roy L. Masinton
Roy L. Masinton
Field Manager
Royal Gorge Field Office

08/15/03
Date

APPROVAL

It is my decision to approve the amendment for the Box Creek Travel Management Plan to the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan, as described in the Royal Gorge Field Manager's recommendation, and analyzed in environmental assessment CO-200-2003-0051EA.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

/s/ Ron Wenker
Ron Wenker, State Director

04/07/04
Date